


DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN RESOURCES
SOCIAL SERVICES ADMINISTRATION
311 WEST SARATOGA STREET
BALTIMORE, MARYLAND 21201

DATE: July 1, 2017

POLICY #: SSA – CW# 17-20
(Supersedes and Replaces SSA-CW#17-04)

TO: Directors, Local Departments of Social Services
Assistant Directors, Services

FROM: Rebecca Jones Gaston, MSW 
Executive Director
Social Services Administration

RE: Maryland's Tuition Waiver Program and
Education and Training Voucher
Program

PROGRAMS AFFECTED: Out-of-Home Placement

ORIGINATING OFFICE: Out-of-Home Placement

ACTION REQUIRED OF: All Local Departments

REQUIRED ACTION: Compliance with the Policy Directive

ACTION DUE DATE: July 1, 2017

CONTACT PERSON: Brandi Stocksdales, LCSW-C
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PURPOSE:

This policy directive provides case workers with information that will assist current and former foster care youth with how to access Maryland's Tuition Waiver for Foster Care Recipients and the Education and Training Voucher (ETV) programs.

BACKGROUND:

Maryland Tuition Waiver for Foster Care Recipients

Pursuant to Section 15-106.1 of the Education Article of the Maryland Annotated Code, Maryland's Tuition Waiver for Foster Care Recipients is available to foster care youth who are enrolled in an academic or vocational program at a Maryland public college or university. The youth must be enrolled as a candidate for an associate's degree, a bachelor's degree, or a vocational certificate on or before he or she reaches the age of 25. On July 1, 2017, SB701/HB462 becomes law, enabling foster youth to take both credit-bearing and noncredit courses.

ACTION:

- To ensure that foster youth are aware of Maryland's Tuition Waiver for Foster Care Recipients and the Education and Training Voucher (ETV) programs, and how to properly access both programs;
- To ensure that foster youth, who are eligible for Maryland's Tuition Waiver for Foster Care Recipients and/or the ETV programs, apply for these programs so that they do not incur large debt due to applying for student loans in order to pay for tuition and fees to attend colleges, universities, and vocational schools;
- To ensure that Maryland public colleges and universities apply the tuition waiver to tuition and any cost associated with enrollment regardless of any scholarships and/grants that a foster youth may receive; and
- To clarify that the definition of "tuition" includes fees for credit-bearing and non-credit courses.

ELIGIBILITY FOR THE MARYLAND TUITION WAIVER PROGRAM

In order to be eligible for the Maryland Tuition Waiver for Foster Care Recipients program, a youth must have:

1. Been placed in out-of-home placement by the Maryland Department of Human Resources; and
2. A. Resided in an out-of-home placement on the individual's 18th birthday or at the time of graduation from high school or upon the successful completion of the General Educational Development (GED) examination; or
B. Resided in an out-of-home placement on the individual's 13th birthday and was placed into guardianship or adopted out of an out-of-home placement after the individual's 13th birthday; or
C. Resided in an out-of-home placement in the State for at least one (1) year on or after the individual's 13th birthday and returned to live with the individual's parents after the out-of-home placement ended; or

- D. Been the younger sibling of an individual child who meets the qualifications stated in **2A-C** and was placed into guardianship or adopted concurrently out of an out-of-home placement by the same guardianship or adoptive family.

The youth must complete and file the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) each year. This application is available at www.fafsa.gov.

The tuition waiver provides exemption from paying any tuition, that includes fees for credit and non-credit courses, as well as mandatory fees at a Maryland public college or university. The Maryland tuition waiver may be applied to two and four year academic programs at a Maryland public college or university and to certificate/license credit and/or non-credit vocational programs at a Maryland public college or university (private colleges and universities, and all vocational schools are **excluded**). The youth must be enrolled at a Maryland public college or university, as a candidate for an associate's degree, a bachelor's degree or a vocational certificate, on or before his or her 25th birthday. *Any scholarships or grants that the youth receives shall not be applied to the tuition cost.* The youth continues to be exempt from paying tuition and fees until 5 years after first enrolling at a Maryland public college or university or the date that the youth is awarded a bachelor's degree, whichever one comes first. The tuition waiver *does not* apply to room and board and other expenses incurred as part of the overall cost of attendance. Furthermore, the tuition waiver may not be applied retroactively.

**Youth placed out of state by the Maryland Department of Human Resources are eligible for Maryland Tuition Waiver as long as they attend a Maryland public college or university.*

ELIGIBILITY FOR MARYLAND'S EDUCATION AND TRAINING VOUCHER PROGRAM

The federal government makes additional funds for post secondary educational opportunities available through an amendment to the Chafee Foster Care Independence Program. The funds can only be used for qualified educational expenses. This program is known as the Education and Training Voucher Program (ETV).

Maryland's Education and Training Voucher Program is administered by Foster Care to Success, formerly known as the Orphan Foundation of America (OFA), and provides up to \$5,000 per federal fiscal year for college and vocational training for full-time students. Part-time student may receive no more than \$2,500.

Foster care youth are eligible for ETV if they are:

- A current foster/kinship care youth committed to the State of Maryland;
- A youth adopted from foster care on or after the age 16;
- A youth who, on or after age 16, entered into guardianship placement from foster care; or
- A former foster youth who left care at the age of 18, but is not yet 21.

- Youth who are 21 years old or older and are actively participating in the ETV voucher program may remain eligible until they reach 23 years old as long as they are continuously enrolled in post-secondary education and making satisfactory progress toward completion of the program.

Additionally, foster care youth must be:

- Age 18,19, or 20 when making first application for ETV;
- A high school graduate or a GED recipient; and
- Accepted/enrolled at a college, university or vocational school that is accredited.

To be eligible for the ETV program, youth must also complete the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) in the year that the youth plans to attend an institution of higher learning.

The Education and Training Voucher shall not be applied to tuition and fees associated with enrollment at Maryland public colleges or universities. The Maryland Tuition Waiver for Foster Care Recipients will cover the cost for those expenses. ETV shall be used for balances associated with room and board, books, school supplies and living expenses for those youth who attend college in Maryland.

GUIDELINES FOR APPLYING FOR MARYLAND TUITION WAIVER AND THE EDUCATION & TRAINING VOUCHER

Maryland Tuition Waiver for Foster Care Recipients:

1. The DHR/SSA Education Specialist shall contact the local department of social services in May and November of each year to inform them that Maryland's Tuition Waiver list is being developed.
2. The local department of social services shall ensure that youth are in the appropriate program assignment in MD CHESSIE by the date that is given by the Education Specialist.
3. The DHR/SSA Education Specialist shall send Maryland's Tuition Waiver list that is generated from MD CHESSIE to the Maryland Higher Education Commission (MHEC) in June and December.
4. The Maryland Higher Education Commission (MHEC) shall ensure that Maryland's Tuition Waiver list is disseminated to the financial aid offices at Maryland public colleges and universities.
5. Students shall complete and file the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) *each year* at www.fafsa.gov.
6. Students must contact the financial aid office at their institution to alert them that they are eligible for the tuition waiver in order for the waiver to be activated.
7. The financial aid offices at Maryland public colleges and universities shall refer to Maryland's Tuition Waiver list that is provided to them by the MHEC to ensure that a student is eligible for the tuition waiver program.

NOTE: If the student's name is not on Maryland's Tuition Waiver list, the financial aid office shall contact DHR/SSA's Education Specialist for verification.

Education and Training Voucher (ETV) Program

1. Students must complete and file the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) at www.fafsa.gov.
2. Students should go to www.fc2sprograms.org click on Maryland, and complete the online ETV application.
3. Once eligibility status is determined, the student should take the financial aid release form to the financial aid office of the institution.
4. The Financial Aid Office must submit documents to the Maryland ETV program on behalf of the student.
5. Youth must apply for the ETV program every year to remain eligible for the program.

**RESPONSIBILITIES OF MARYLAND PUBLIC COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES
FINANCIAL AID & CASHIER'S OFFICES**

1. Verify if the student is on Maryland's Tuition Waiver list. If the student's name is not on the list, the financial aid office shall contact DHR/SSA's Education Specialist for verification;
2. Apply the tuition waiver to balances associated with tuition and any fees associated with enrollment;
3. If applicable, apply the Education and Training Voucher (ETV) to balances associated with room and board. After room and board expenses are paid, any remaining funds should be given to the student. ETV *shall not* be applied to tuition and fees associated with enrollment;
4. Accurately complete the ETV financial aid release form. This includes indicating the amount that the student will receive from grants, scholarships, and tuition waiver on the financial aid release form; and
5. The cashier's office shall submit the ETV's financial aid release form to the ETV program via fax, and keep the student apprised of all expenses incurred as a part of the overall cost of attendance.